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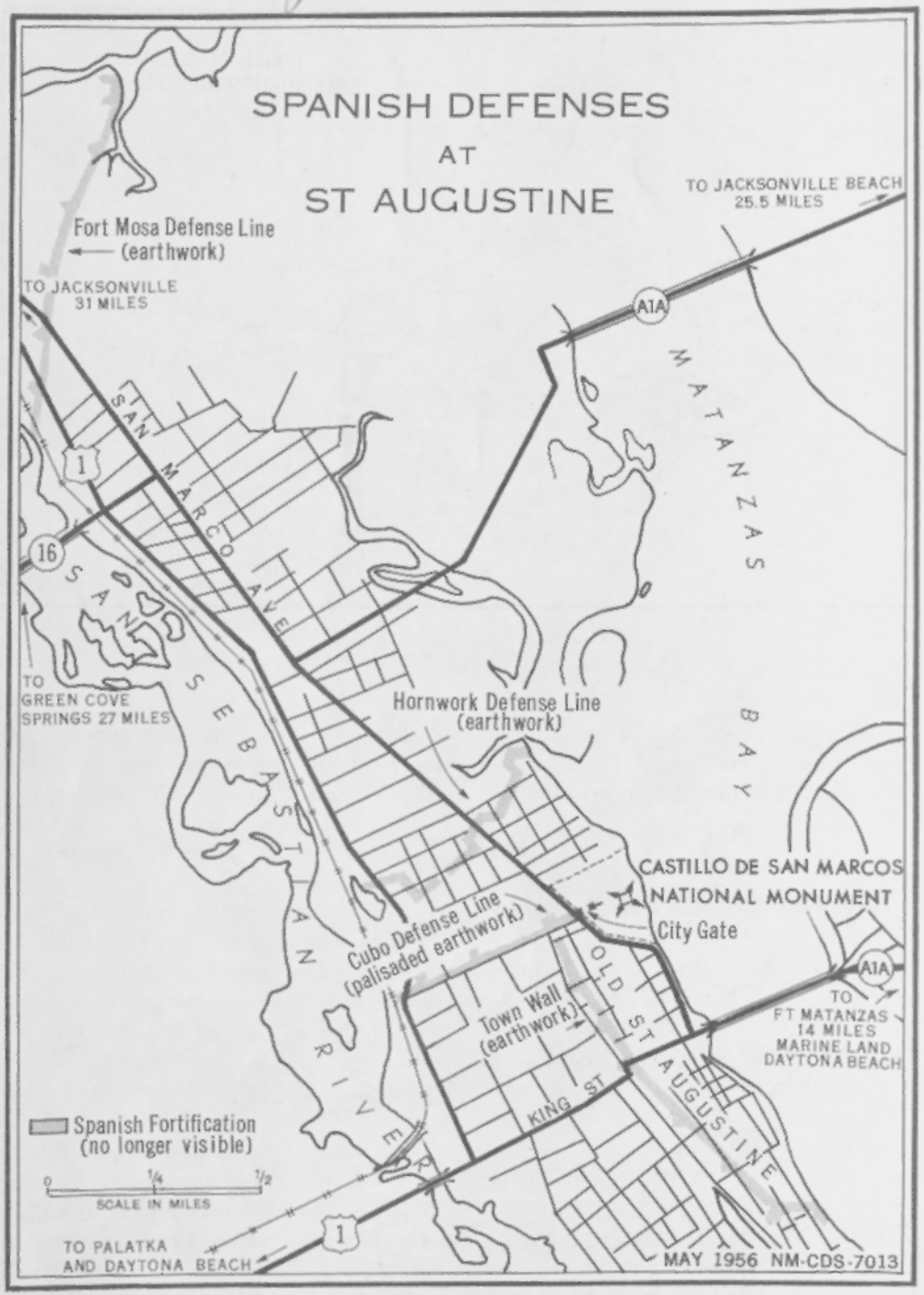

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(Cover) The watchtower.

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St. Augustine, Florida

Castillo de San Marcos

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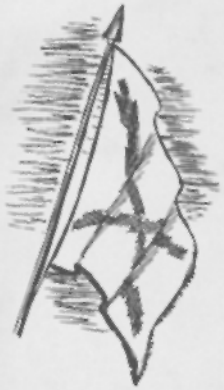


Castillo de San Marcos

NATIONAL MONUMENT

The well-preserved Spanish fortifications in Saint Augustine which played a major role in the Spanish-English struggle for the Southeast (1650–1750).

When Spain conquered and colonized the rich Caribbean country, this land of Florida, being close to the route of the Spanish treasure ships, was coveted by France and England. Spain's power in Florida was centered at St. Augustine, and Castillo de San Marcos was the symbol of that power.

The Americas slipped from Spain's grasp. But the grim Castillo, battered and besieged, still mirrors those days of pikeman and musketeer. *It is the real thing.* Strong-standing walls, historically significant, bring the past into the present, so that all may see—and understand.

The Spanish Treasure Fleet

Castillo de San Marcos was the northernmost outpost of a vast Spanish empire in the New World. Today, for half the people of this hemisphere Spanish is the mother tongue.

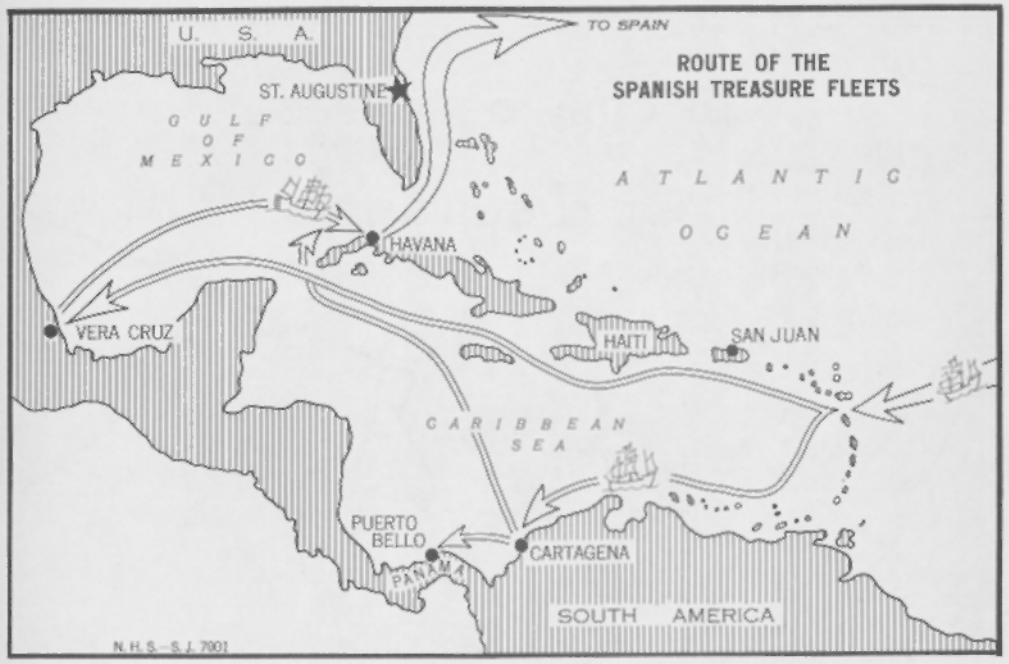
The Americas were discovered at just the right time for the Spanish. After years of fighting Moorish invaders, Spain was at last a unified nation. When Columbus sailed again in 1493, thousands of men were free to follow him to fame and fortune. By 1574 there were some 200 towns in tropical America, exporting hides, hemp, sugar, gold, silver, and pearls.

By contrast, North America was a wilderness. In 1561, King Philip forbade new tries at colonizing it.

Why, then, did a French colony named Fort Caroline, planted in Florida in 1564, on the St. Johns River, change the course of events?

Like a menacing dagger, the Florida peninsula thrust toward the heart of Spain's wealth. Richly loaded galleons sailed along the Florida coast in convoy for protection against pirates. They followed wind and current in a great circle route, from Spain westward to the Caribbean, then from Havana, past Florida and eastward to home. To the Spanish, Fort Caroline was a nest of pirates. So in 1565 they destroyed it. They established their own colony—St. Augustine—making Florida a haven rather than a threat. That colony survived flood, fire, and famine, to grow for a time into the capital of a vast wilderness domain.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.



A Link in the Caribbean Defense Chain

Sir Francis Drake's raid upon St. Augustine in 1586 was a sign of the times—England's determination to destroy the Spanish monopoly in the New World. No Spanish ship or settlement was safe. Spain tightened the convoys and built massive forts at key harbors in the Caribbean.

St. Augustine, no wealthy seaport, had little more than palisaded earthworks. Its real protection were the Franciscan priests, patiently making converts among the Indians. It was realized that natives friendly to Spain would be unfriendly to Spain's enemies.

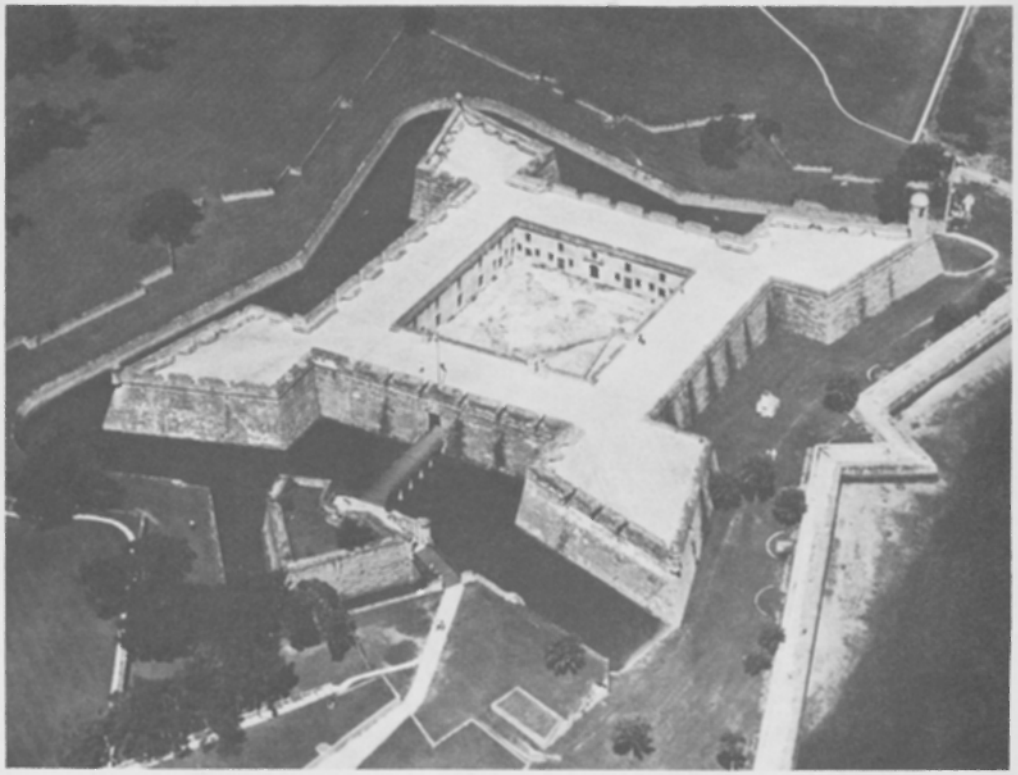
But in Virginia, the English gained a foothold on the Spanish-claimed continent. English traders, turning Indian enemies into allies, crumbled the Spanish defense. English pirates again sacked St. Augustine in 1668.

The settlement of Charleston in 1670 brought the English still closer to Florida.

To build a permanent defense against these enemies, Queen Mariana of Spain at last ordered money sent from Mexico City.

Building the Fort

Construction of the Castillo began in 1672 and lasted until 1696, almost 25 years. Walls 30 feet high and up to 12 feet thick were built of a native shellstone called coquina (ko-KEE-na). Mortar was made from shell lime. The labor crew, in addition to the Spanish artisans, usually numbered about



The Castillo.

100, mostly Indian draftees. Day wages ranged from $3 for the engineer, to 12½ cents plus rations for Indian labor.

The Castillo was a good fort, and a handsome one. Its white-plastered walls stood on the site of an old Indian midden (shell heap), near the town and opposite the harbor mouth, so that travelers by land or sea had to pass under its guns. A symmetrical or "regular" fort in the style developed by Italo-Spanish engineers, it was well armed, and garrisoned with about 100 men.

An Impregnable Fort in Its Day

Between 1650 and 1750 the Southeast was in turmoil, and the Castillo was the hub of the action. Spanish forays against the Carolinas (in 1686 and 1706) and Georgia (in 1742) began here. It was the target for death-dealing raids by pirate, Indian, or Englishman in 1683, 1704, 1728, and 1743; it was besieged in 1702 and 1740. Six serious threats inside of 60 years!

The baptism of fire came in 1702, during Queen Anne's War. South Carolina's Governor James Moore with 500 men seized St. Augustine and unsuccessfully besieged the fort for 50 days. Before Moore left, he set fire to the town. Later, the Spanish ringed the town with strong earthworks to keep out raiders.

Moore also destroyed the Spanish missions of Florida and carried off 1,400 Indians as slaves. The missions never recovered, nor did Spanish Florida. For now the French on the Mississippi separated Florida from Mexico. The English were pushing into the Georgia country. While engineers were modernizing the fort, building bombproof rooms in 1738–39, hostile Indians were ranging to the very walls. "You know the terror men feel," wrote the Spanish governor, "when they even hear the name of Florida."

The province was a powder keg. The spark to set off the explosion came from an English vessel off the coast.

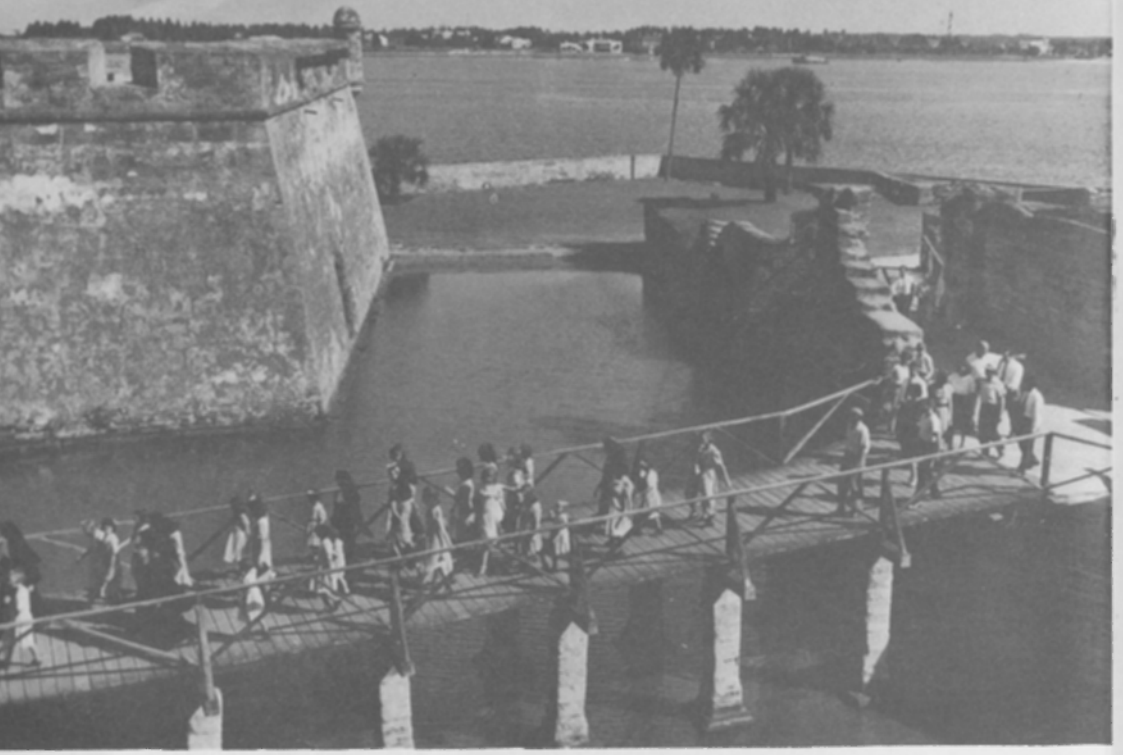
The War of Jenkins' Ear

Spain allowed only Spanish trade with her colonies. Many British ships were seized as smugglers. One skipper claimed that Florida Spaniards boarded his ship and cut off his ear. The pickled ear, shown to Parliament, decided Britain on war—the War of Jenkins' Ear.

The Founder of Georgia, James Oglethorpe, swore to take St. Augustine or leave his bones before its walls. From Fort Frederica, Ga., he set out in 1740 with a Georgia-Carolina attack force of 900 men and a fleet of 13 vessels. Awaiting him at St. Augustine were 4 swift galiots in the harbor, and 750 men under Col. Manuel de Montiano, the Governor.

While the British fleet blockaded the harbor to starve the Spaniards, English gunners shelled the town, thinking to drive the population into the fort, where their cries would demoralize the defense. But as the Castillo alarm bell rang, the 2,000 townspeople,

The gunners' storeroom.



Bridge leading into the fort.

The courtyard.

instead of fleeing to the fort, simply moved out of range! There would be no refugees to distract the soldier-defenders.

The fort suffered only slight damage. A Spanish sortie destroyed a camp of Scotch Highlanders. Oglethorpe gave up after the defenders, desperate from hunger, fought through the blockade to fetch food from Havana.

Two years later, a Spanish reprisal was turned back near Georgia's Fort Frederica. The War of Jenkins' Ear was a war of failures, both here and in the Caribbean. The real decision was delayed until the Seven Years' War (1755–62), wherein Britain ousted France from North America and at last gained Spanish Florida by treaty (1763).

Under Four Flags

The British period in Florida lasted only 20 years. Then another treaty turned Florida back to Spain. During the interval, the American Revolution broke out, and although the Castillo was not in action, its British prison held famous "rebels" such as Brig. Gen. Christopher Gadsden, Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina.

The second Spanish occupation of Florida (1783–1821) was marked by border unrest and an influx of Georgia and Carolina settlers. Spain finally ceded the troublesome territory to the United States.

Through much of the 1800's, the fort was a military prison. In 1837, during the Seminole War, the Indian leader, Wildcat, led an escape from here; in later years several hundred Indians from the Southwest were imprisoned at the Castillo. Confederate forces occupied it briefly, but left before Federal troops arrived in 1862. The last real military use was as a prison during the Spanish-American war (1898–99). In 1924, Castillo de San Marcos was established as a national monument by Presidential proclamation under the jurisdiction of the War Department. In 1933, it was transferred to the National Park Service.

About Your Visit

Included in Castillo de San Marcos National Monument are the masonry fort, surrounded by moat and outworks, and the city gate which once formed part of the old town wall. A small fee is charged for entrance to the fort ramparts, rooms, and museum exhibits, which are open daily from 8:30 a. m. to 5:30 p. m. Guide service is free.

Related Areas

Other areas relating to colonial conflict in the southeast are Fort Matanzas National Monument near St. Augustine, Fort Caroline National Memorial near Jacksonville, Fla., and Fort Frederica National Monument near Brunswick, Ga.

Administration

Castillo de San Marcos National Monument is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 1431, St. Augustine, Fla., is in immediate charge.

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